

BRANDING THE CITY

STREETSCAPE DESIGN GUIDELINES *FALLS CHURCH, VA*

Adopted XXX

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Special Thanks

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Introduction

Streetscape expresses the character of a community. It advertises what the City cares about and how it sees itself.

The term “streetscape” encompasses many different design elements in the City. As a minimum, it includes the design and spacing of street furniture and street trees. Streetscape extends to public art and the selection of building materials.

“Streetscapes and their visual experience largely influences public places where people interact, and it ultimately helps define a community’s aesthetic quality, economic activity, health, and sustainability”ⁱ

The Value of Streetscape

Quality streetscape enhances the visual appearance of the City and improves the pedestrian environment. More than that, streetscape improves economic performance, environmental quality, and public health of communities.



Figure 1: Attractive signs, consistent lighting, and hanging flower baskets create an inviting atmosphere in Staunton, VA.

Building the City’s Brand

The City of Falls Church is a unique and special place. These streetscape guidelines serve to highlight and build upon the City’s special characteristics. The City’s streetscape is part of the City’s brand. Streetscape advertises the City’s to visitors and serves as a point of pride for residents.

Things that make the City special include the following:

- The City’s unique **history**
- High use of street **trees** and other **greenery**
- **Progressive transportation**, including alternatives to automobile transportation
- A **family friendly** place



Streetscape Goals

The City's streetscape is part of the public realm and serves many purposes. In particular, the design and implementation of the City's streetscape should accomplish the following goals:

1. Use streetscape elements to **brand the City**;
2. **Create an identity** that is different from the rest of the region;
3. **Promote economic activity** in the City's commercial areas;
4. Provide **accessibility and safety** for street users.



Figure 2: The Great Streets program in San Francisco, CA, creates streetscapes that build the City's brand as an attractive, outdoor, walkable place.

How to Use These Guidelines

These guidelines should be used for the design of all public and private projects in the City's commercial areas. These guidelines should be referenced by Advisory Boards and Commissions, City staff, and the private sector throughout a project's development, delivery, and maintenance.

Flexibility

These guidelines are a tool for developing good urban design. They are not a restriction on creativity. In many urban places, it is the unique elements that people enjoy most.

Guidelines on street cross sections should be adhered to unless conditions dictate otherwise. Guidelines on street furniture and materials should generally be adhered to. Variations should be considered to the extent they enhance the City's brand and support the goals of these guidelines.



Figure 3: The Tinner Hill streetscape, a variation from the standard, highlights the City's cultural heritage

Relationship to Other Plans

These streetscape guidelines are part of a larger family of plans that inform development in the City of Falls Church. This family begins with the Comprehensive Plan and then branches out to include Small Area Plans, Master Plans, and Design Guidelines.

This document serves as the principles policy guide for streetscape design. When this document is silent on a particular issue, other plans should be referenced as needed.



Figure 4: Creative design applied to a leftover space in Culpeper, VA, create a special place.



Figure 5: Repurposed parallel parking spaces in Philadelphia, PA, create a multiuse space for residents and visitors.

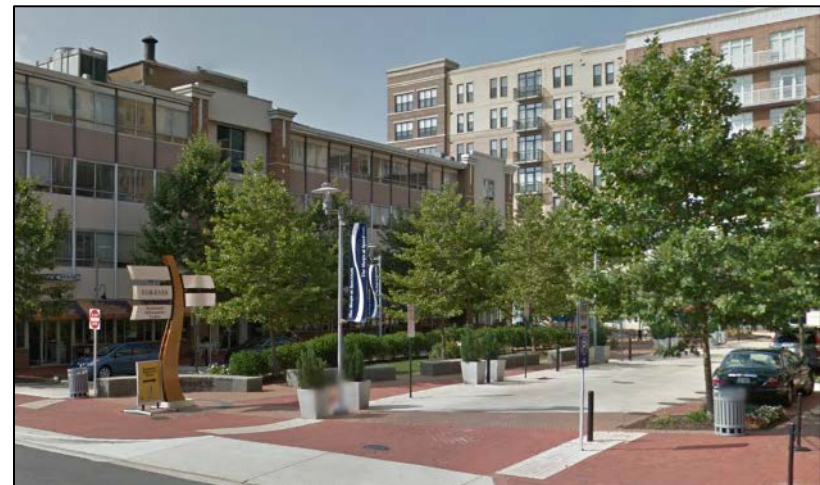
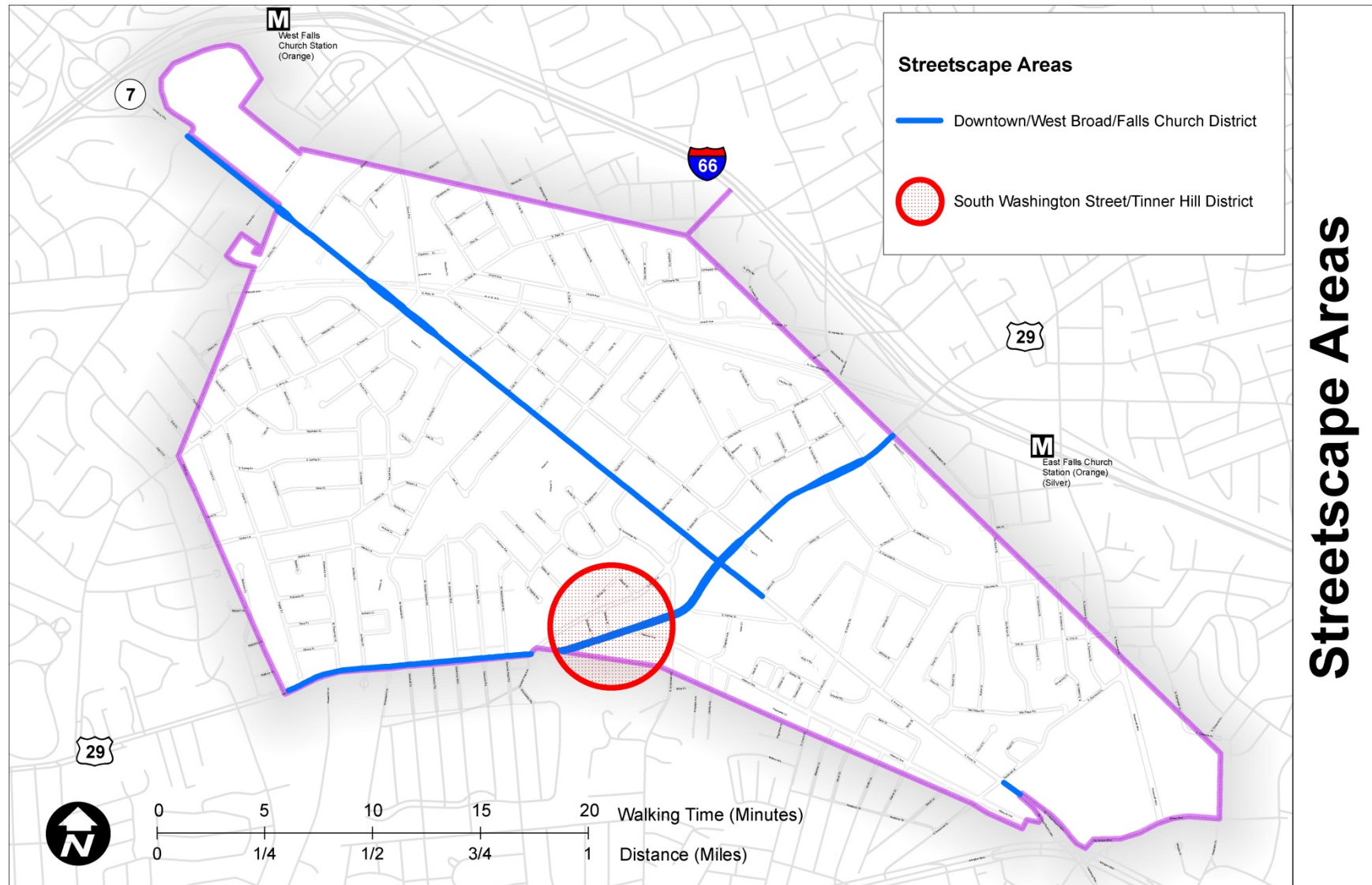


Figure 6: Pedestrian-scale design creates an inviting space in the Spectrum Building on West Broad Street.



Streetscape Districts

To build the City's brand, a small number of different "streetscape districts" are used throughout the City. The districts have some unique and some common elements. For example, all of the districts share the same cross section design and street light design. They differ in bench style and paver material.

Downtown/West Broad/Falls Church District

This district builds on the City's 1987 streetscape plan for West Broad Street. This district reinforces traditional urban design concepts in the City.

Geography

The Downtown/West Broad/Falls Church district streetscape extends from the Fairfax County line along West Broad Street (SR 7), south to, and including North Washington Street (US 29) to the Arlington County line, and includes a short portion of East Broad Street from Washington Street to Lawton Street, as well as East Broad Street near the Eden Center.



Figure 7: Streetscape in the Downtown/West Broad/Falls Church District highlight large trees and red brick paver sidewalks.

Washington Street/Tinner Hill District

This district builds on the more modern design used for the Pearson Square and Tax Analyst buildings. With the completion of the City's intermodal plaza, the design will be carried along South Washington Street between Annandale Road and South Maple Avenue.

Geography

The Washington Street streetscape extends from the city line with Fairfax County to the Annandale Road intersection.



Figure 8: Streetscape in the Washington Street / Tinner Hill district provides a more open feel and uses pink brick paver sidewalks.

Street Furniture

Well-designed street furniture contributes to a functioning streetscape. First, street furniture provides functionality, comfort, and convenience. Second, attractive furniture enhances branding efforts. Lastly, standard furniture design creates continuity.

Downtown/West Broad/Downtown District

Furniture within the Downtown / West Broad / Downtown District highlights the historic, Victorian design elements of the City.

Street Lights and Traffic Signals



Name, style, color

Bench



Name, style, color

Trash and Recycling Cans



Name, style, color

Bicycle Racks



Name, style, color

To keep bicycles upright, alternative racks should have two points of contact with the frame.

Bus Shelter



Name, style, color

Washington Street/Tinner Hill District

Furniture within the Washington Street / Tinner Hill District connects to the Downtown District through common elements like street lights, trash cans, and bus shelters. Unique elements highlight the district as its own special place.

Street Lights and Traffic Signals

<<insert image>>

Name, style, color

Bench



Name, style, color

Trash and Recycling Cans



Name, style, color

Bicycle Racks

<<insert image>>

Name, style, color

To keep bicycles upright, alternative racks should have two points of contact with the frame.

Bus Shelter



Name, style, color

Tree Planters

Street trees provide numerous benefits. Street trees stimulate downtown business, provide cleaner air, prevent erosion and runoff, calm automobile traffic, and encourage walking. Tree species selection and planter design should balance these interests.

Tree Size and Shape

Trees come in different sizes and shapes. For street trees, critical design features include (1) enough spread to provide consistent canopy and (2) minimum branch heights to allow visibility to shops and provide clearance for pedestrians and other forms of traffic. These needs lead to the selection of larger canopy style trees.

Tree Health and Planter Dimensions

To survive and thrive, trees require access to non-compacted soil and adequate amounts of water. These needs can be quantified by soil volume and open surface area. In order to accommodate canopy tree, planters should provide a minimum soil volume of 1,000 ft³ per tree, a minimum open surface area of 60 ft² per tree, and have a minimum width of 6 feet.

Planter Styles

Tree planter design must be context sensitive. Planter design needs to consider available sidewalk and right-of-way widths, proximity to bus stops/shelters, and emergency services access. Three types of

planters are described in this plan. Each is appropriate in different settings.

<<insert image of a street with good tree canopy using raised planters>>

<<insert image of street with good tree canopy using flush planters>>

Planter Type



Why Use

Flush planter beds are used prevent trip hazards or where unobstructed access is required.

When to Use

Flush planter beds should be used in to accommodate emergency services access, such as fire and medical. They should also be used in areas with limited sidewalk width.



Edged planters provide protection for trees and vegetation from foot traffic, pets, and winter road salt.

Edged planters should be the predominant planter type used in all areas. Raised planters help prevent soil compaction and protection soil from winter sidewalk salt.



Raised planters can be used to provide seating areas and to create or add to other points of interest.

Raised planters should be used to provide secondary seating near plazas, pocket parks, restaurants, and other gathering spaces.

Cross Sections

These guidelines break the sidewalk into three spaces – the building space, the pedestrian space, and the amenity space. The cross section defines the amount of space allocated to each space.



Building Zone

The building zone blends the public and private realms. The building zone provides activity spaces and provides a connection between activity inside of buildings and public uses along the sidewalk. The build zone is the area between the building face and the pedestrian zone. The building zone includes outdoor dining, furnishings, accent plantings, art, and merchandise displays.

Pedestrian Zone

The pedestrian zone provides a space for pedestrian and bicycle travel. The pedestrian zone extends from the building zone to the amenity zone. The pedestrian zone should be clear of obstacles or encroachments.

Amenity Zone

The amenity zone provides a space for street infrastructure and serves as a buffer between pedestrian and automobile traffic. The amenity zone provides space for street trees, street lights, benches, trash and recycling cans, bike racks, bus stops, and public art.

Spacing

Research into streetscape design shows good streetscapes blend functionality and vibrancy. This means providing spaces to walk as well as spaces for activity and amenities.

By City Ordinance, new buildings along Broad Street and Washington Street must have a 20 foot setback. To allow for canopy trees, a 6 foot amenity space should be provided. The remaining space should be split between building space (7 feet) and pedestrian clear space (7 feet).

When more than 20 feet is available, the additional space should be used to increase the pedestrian clear space and the building space. This will increase vibrancy and accessibility.

Because of existing buildings, 20 feet is not available in some spaces. When this is the cases, the following minimum spaces should be provided: amenity space 6 feet – to allow for canopy trees; clear space 5 feet – to allow two people to walk side by side; and building space 3 feet – to allow for small café tables, small planters, and opening doors.

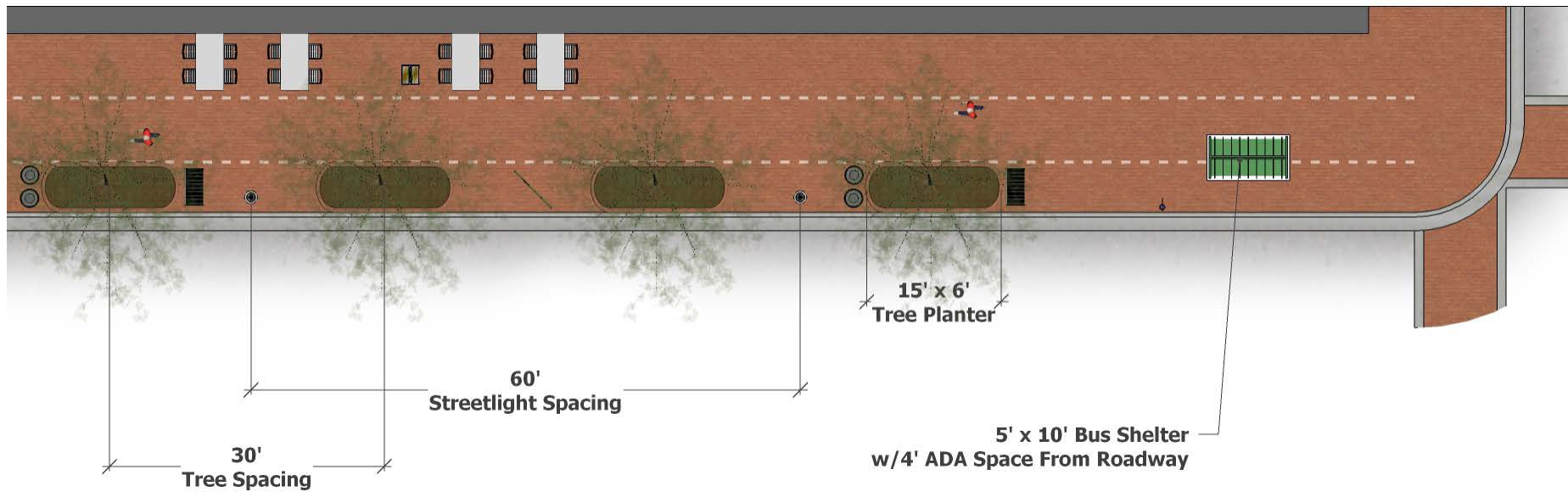
Passable and Impassable Spaces

Streetscape elements can be passable, like the pedestrian zone and areas between amenities. Or they can be impassable, like tree

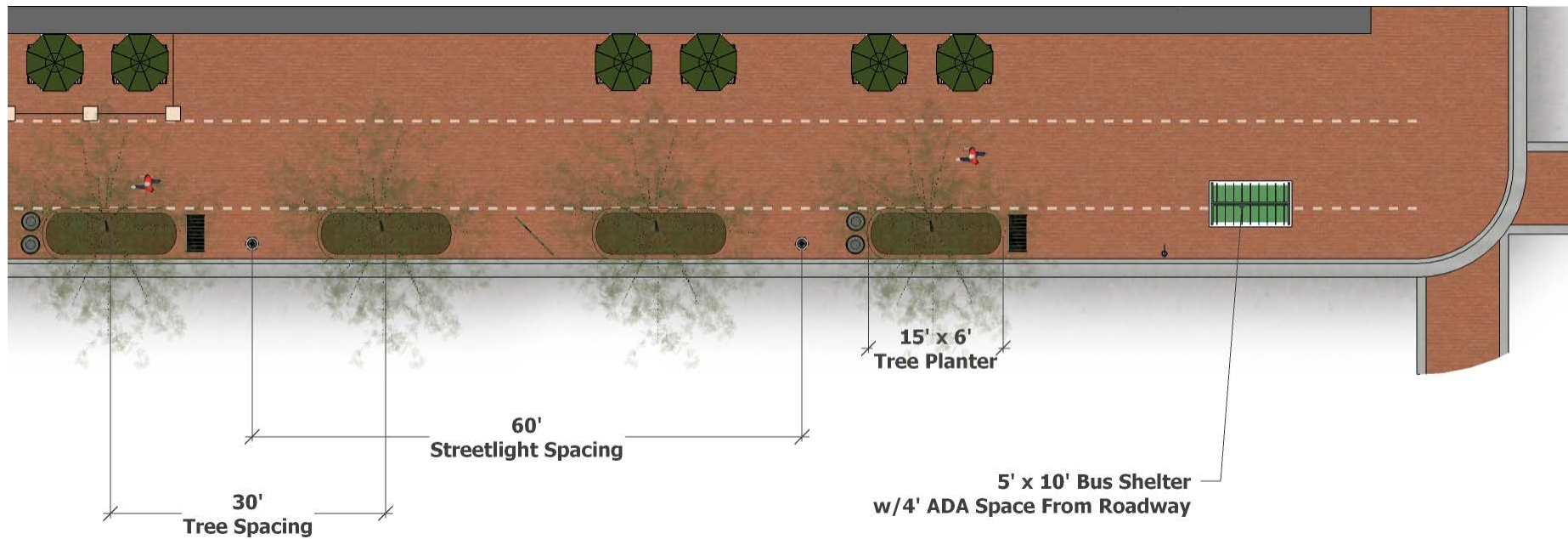
planters, dining areas, and bus shelters. When the pedestrian space is relatively narrow, then the other areas of the street must be more passable to allow for easier passage. When the pedestrian space is relatively wide, then the other areas of the street can be less passable. Examples from other places suggest the following guides.

Pedestrian Clear Space	Percent Passable Sidewalk
5 Feet	75%
Between 5 and 10 Feet	60%
10 Feet or More	50%

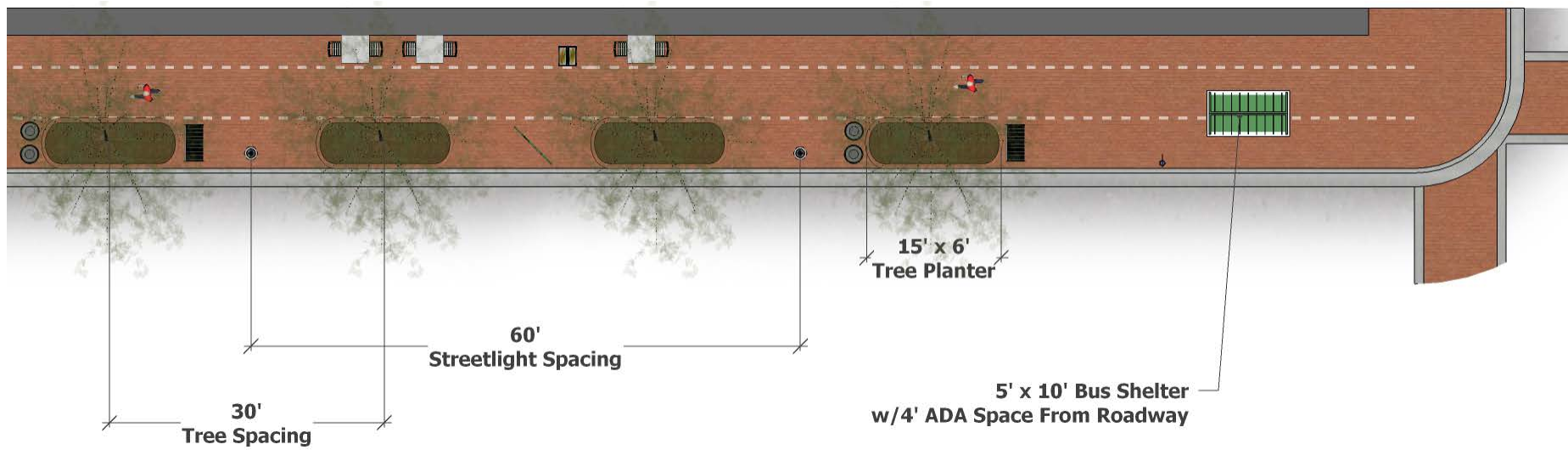
Typical Twenty Foot Cross Section



Typical Twenty-Five Foot Cross Section



Typical Fifteen Foot Cross Section



Materials

Brick Pavers

Brick pavers are an attractive, durable material. They have been the traditional material of choice for commercial sidewalks in the City. Brick and concrete banding patterns can be used on side streets to transition to residential areas, where concrete is the typical sidewalk material.

Variations in color and pattern should be used to highlight building entrances and driveways.



Figure 9: Transitional materials alert pedestrians to the building's driveway.

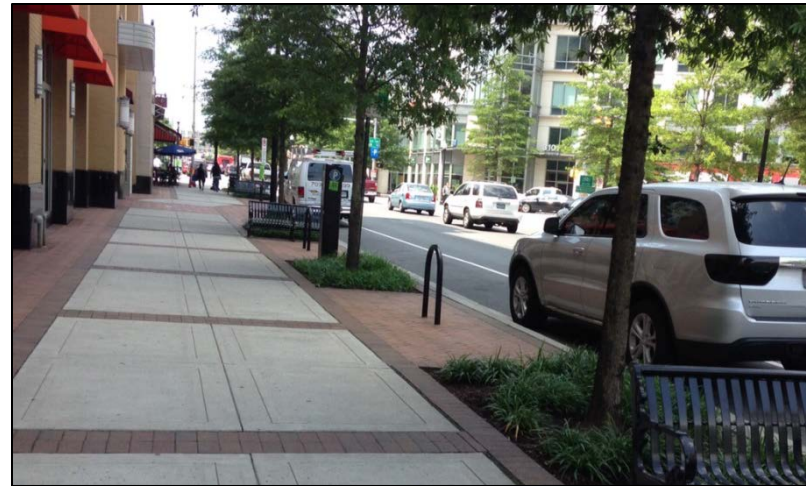


Figure 10: Brick banding surrounds concrete panels to create a decorative sidewalk.

Utilities

Utilities should be designed to blend functionality and design.

Backflow Preventers

- What purpose do they serve?
- What are placement restrictions/requirements?
- How should they be designed?
- photo

Utility Access

- What purpose do they serve?
- What are placement restrictions/requirements?

Manhole covers should be treated to blend with surrounding materials.



Electrical Transformers

- What purpose do they serve?

- What are placement restrictions/requirements?

When transformers cannot be buried or screened, they become opportunities for public art.



Fire Hydrants

- What purpose do they serve?
- What are placement restrictions/requirements?
- How should they be designed?
- photo

Public Art

Murals

Statues

Intersection Treatments

Maintenance

The City of Falls Church takes pride in its streetscape and expects it to be maintained to a high standard. Financial pressures and competing interests make it difficult to maintain the streetscape through the use of general government resources alone.

Public/private partnerships can be effective tools for maintaining the City's streetscape.

Planting Rehabilitation

With the adoption of the West Broad Street Small Area Plan in 2016, the City recognized that partnerships with adjacent business and property owners could be an effective way to maintain plantings. The City should move forward with the directives in the adopted small area plan to develop maintenance agreements with adjacent owners for planting areas. These maintenance agreements would establish expectations for maintenance and provide protections for long term tree health.

Litter Control

The City has long had an adopt-a-park program to help control litter and clean out invasive vegetation. A broader adopt-a-spot program could be stood up to encourage people to sign up for litter control along stretches of the City's commercial streets. City-provided signs would recognize the contributions of individuals and groups to the City's beautification efforts.

<<photo of a landscaping crew replanting a bed>>

<<photo of volunteer litter pickup and an adopt a spot sign>>

ⁱ Complete Communities – Delaware Project Site, University of Delaware
<http://www.completecommunitiesde.org/planning/complete-streets/>